

Let's Retire the Rumor about Life Expectancy



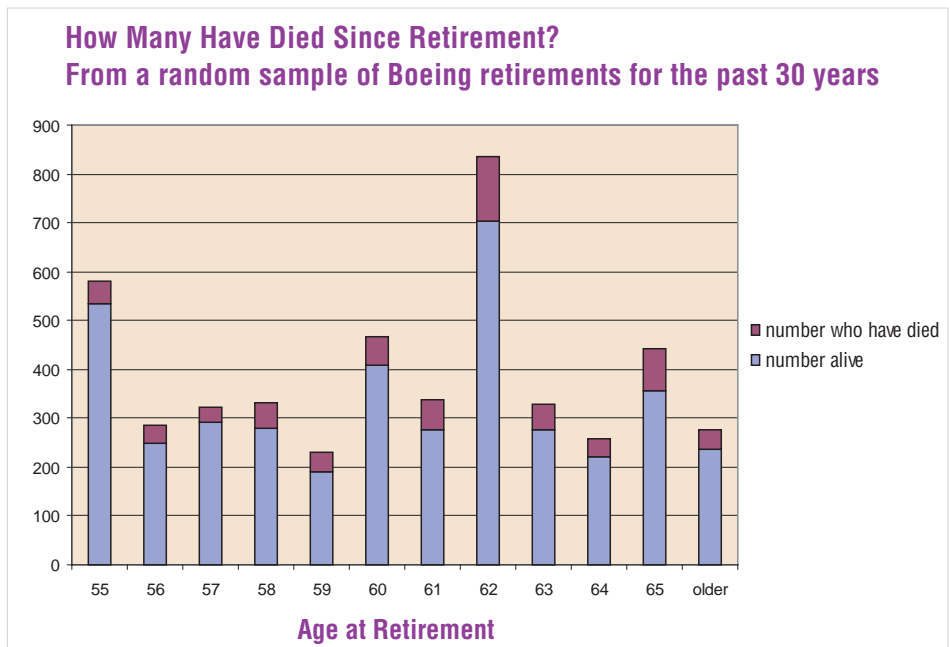
An incorrect, but alarming, chart that claims to show the life expectancy of Boeing retirees has been circulating on the Internet. According to this chart, Boeing employees who retire at 65 die much sooner than employees who retire at earlier ages. Even though this chart has been in existence for over twenty years, it is not based on fact. There is no correlation between age at retirement and life expectancy of Boeing retirees.

The Fact

Data shows Boeing retirees live longer than the national average, regardless of age at retirement.

We examine data regularly for trends. Our data shows that life expectancy of a Boeing retiree does not depend on the age at retirement. The chart below is based on 4,699 random samples from thirty years of retirements at Boeing. Please note that most retirees, who retired during this time period, are still alive regardless of their age of retirement. In fact, for those who retired at age 65 and are still alive – the average age is 78. This is higher than the life expectancy at birth recently published by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control of 77.2 years.

“The idea that working longer will shorten a Boeing employee’s life expectancy simply isn’t true,” said Julie Curtis, an actuary at Boeing. I’ve been looking at the data since 1983, and the length of a retiree’s life is unrelated to the age at his or her retirement. Our retirees tend to live a long time no matter how old they are when they retire. If the charts were accurate, we wouldn’t have the large number of retirees that we do (nearly 500,000) and the large amount of pension payments (more than \$2 billion a year).”



The first inaccurate life expectancy chart surfaced in the early 80s, and versions of it have been floating around for years – almost as an “urban myth.” The Internet now spreads the misinformation farther, faster, and in a more professional-appearing form. Boeing and many other companies have tried to dispel the misconception. Unfortunately, the bad news – even though it is fiction – catches people’s attention, while the good news (that Boeing employees generally live longer than the national average), is accurate but often overlooked.

TotalAccess Tip

You can do projections of your own retirement benefits using different assumptions. Go to the “My Savings & Pension” page and click on either “Boeing Savings Plan Online” or “Boeing Pension Plans Online.”